

his excellent presentation of George Washington's Farewell Address. It has been an important Senate tradition for many years. I thank him for his reading of that for all of us on this important occasion.

#### BUDGET CUT DEBATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by welcoming everyone back from the recess. It is good to be back. Time away from Washington is an opportunity to step back and measure the priorities of party against those of people who sent us here to make sure they are properly aligned.

As the two parties reengage this week in a debate about our Nation's finances, it is vital that we focus not on mere partisan advantage but on what is right for the Nation. When it comes to the two choices before us of either maintaining an unsustainable status quo on spending or beginning to cut spending, the choice could not be more clear.

This morning's news brought word that a 47-member panel of some of the Nation's top business economists view government overspending as the top threat to our economy. In other words, a majority of those experts think Washington's inability to live within its means is the single greatest threat to our Nation's economic future. This is not a groundbreaking observation. After all, Americans have been telling lawmakers for more than 2 years that business as usual simply will not cut it anymore. They want us to get our fiscal house in order and to start to create the right conditions for private sector job growth. But today's news is further confirmation of the stakes in the debate over spending and that Democrats in Congress need to rethink the approach they have taken up to now.

The message from the November elections is quite clear: Stop spending money we don't have. Yet Democratic leaders persist in defending budgets that do just that well into the future.

Earlier this month, the President unveiled a 10-year budget for the government. At no point in this 10-year projection would the government spend less than it takes in. It does not even try. Just look at the estimates for this year alone. Unless we start to cut this year's projected spending, Washington will spend more than \$1.5 trillion more than it takes in—\$1.5 trillion more than it takes in this year—about \$350 billion more in red ink than we had last year. That is \$350 billion more in red ink than we had last year. Think about that—a \$350 billion increase in deficit spending over last year after an election in which the voters unambiguously said they want us to cut spending and stop adding debt.

Next year, Democrats in Congress want us to do it again. Once again, they plan to spend more than \$1 trillion more than we take in, and the same pattern the year after that. They want to spend hundreds of billions of

dollars more than we take in. And on and on.

All of this overspending, of course, just adds to our overall debt. When you add it all up, the numbers are truly staggering. As a result of Democratic budgets, the Federal debt 5 years from now is expected to exceed \$20 trillion—5 years from now, \$20 trillion. Interest payments alone on that debt will exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$  trillion a year. That is just interest payments on the \$20 trillion debt— $\frac{1}{2}$  trillion a year. Talk about a disconnect.

The American people have spent the last 2 years trying to get their own fiscal houses in order. Millions have lost their jobs. Millions more have lost their homes. Meanwhile, what have the Democrats in Washington been up to? On the day the President was sworn into office, the national debt was \$10.6 trillion. In the 25 months since, it has increased by about \$3.5 trillion. And despite a national uprising over this profligacy and an election that represented a wholesale repudiation of it, here is the President's response: Spend more. He calls it investments.

What about Democratic leaders in Congress? Are they reading the writing on the wall? Until this past weekend, they insisted they could not agree to cut a dime in spending—not a dime. Rather than look for ways the two parties can work together to rein in spending, they looked for ways to marginalize those who are working hard to come up with ways to do it. They called anybody who wanted to cut a dime in spending an extremist. I will tell you what is extreme, Mr. President. What is extreme is \$20 trillion in debt. That is what is extreme. Or  $\frac{1}{2}$  trillion in interest payments a year is extreme. Refusing to agree to even try to live within your means is extreme.

Tomorrow, the House will have a vote on a 2-week spending bill. This bill represents an effort to change the culture in Washington. It says: Let's start to change the mentality around here. Let's find \$4 billion that all of us can agree to cut and cut it and continue from that good start. Democratic leaders in Congress have resisted even this up until a few days ago. Now they have started to suggest they might be willing to agree to it. This is progress.

This week, Democrats will have the opportunity to show they have gotten the message. They can show they agree the time has come to change the status quo. Less spending, lower debt, reining in the size and scope of government, that is what is needed. That is how we will create the conditions for private sector job growth.

Democratic leaders in Congress have tried record spending and deficits. What has it gotten us? More than \$3 trillion more in debt and 3 million more jobs lost—\$3 trillion in new debt while we lost 3 million jobs. Democrats have an opportunity this week to show they get it. They have an opportunity to show that the status quo on spend-

ing and debt is no longer an option, to turn a corner. A lot depends on how they respond to that opportunity. Will they continue to see what they can get away with or will they finally concede that the old way of doing business must come to an end?

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 3:30 p.m. today. Senators during that period of time will be able to speak for up to 10 minutes each. At 3:30 p.m., we will move to consideration of S. 23, which is the Patent Reform Act. At 4:30 p.m., the Senate will turn to executive session to consider the nominations of Amy Totenberg, of Georgia, to be a U.S. district judge and Steve C. Jones, of Georgia, to be a U.S. district judge. The time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled in the usual form. At 5:30 p.m., Senators should expect a voice vote on confirmation of the Totenberg nomination, to be followed by a rollcall vote on confirmation of the Jones nomination. We hope to complete action on the patent reform bill and consider a continuing resolution during this week's session.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period for the transaction of morning business until 3:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SPENDING

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about our dilemma in the Federal Government. The American people are watching as we try to deal with our spending issues. I know there is a big debate over the 2-week spending issue, an issue where we are trying